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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, DC—Following passage of the District's FY 2006 Appropriation by the full Senate Appropriations Committee today, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) praised its most important provision—a long sought budget autonomy change allowing the District to spend incoming revenue without returning to Congress seeking authority to spend that money by submitting a request in the annual federal supplemental. It is expected that this appropriation provision will be made permanent through the D.C. Omnibus Authorization Act shortly to be introduced by Congresswoman Norton and Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA). "This start toward full budget autonomy by freeing D.C. from the annual federal supplemental process is a big deal for better management and for home rule," Norton said.

The Congresswoman said that otherwise perhaps the major significance of the bill this year was what was not in it. Norton worked hard to keep out of the Senate appropriation bill the House-passed rider that repealed one section of the city's gun safety laws, although most of the ban remains intact. The bill also does not contain a provision Norton strongly opposed to expand the voucher program imposed on the city during the last Congress. She thanked Senate D.C. Appropriations Committee Chairman Sam Brownback (R-KS) and Ranking Member Mary Landrieu (D-LA) for maintaining the Senate pattern of producing a bill that does not deny self-governing rights to D.C. officials and residents.

Although the most important parts of the D.C. gun safety laws remain intact—the handgun ban and the registration requirements—Norton is fighting to eliminate the House rider allowing loaded shotguns and rifles. To help with this effort, Norton will host a "Talk Back to Congress and Help Save D.C. Gun Laws Town Meeting," next Tuesday, July 26, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM at Shaw Junior High School, 9th and Rhode Island Avenue, NW. Mayor Anthony Williams, Metropolitan Police Chief Charles Ramsey and survivors of children killed by gun violence will speak. Norton is encouraging residents to use the town meeting to let Congress know how important the gun safety laws are to them.

Senator Brownback also initiated 100 percent federally-funded Marriage Development Accounts in the appropriation to promote and save marriage and eliminate finances as a factor. He discussed the program with the Congresswoman, who found the idea consistent with and re-enforcing of her work with the Commission on Black Men and Boys. Norton founded the Commission to address the unique problems of African American males as a way to strengthen the Black family and the quality of life for African American children, 70 per cent of whom are born to never-married women nationwide. The voluntary Marriage Development Accounts, set up by engaged or married couples for home purchases, education and small business expenses, will be matched up to three to one by the federal government. The program also provides marriage and relationship counseling on a voluntary basis.

Norton said, "The deterioration of the American family, that is even more severe among African Americans, requires a complicated recipe of government, community and individual action that is mostly absent. The virtual disappearance of marriage among many young African Americans of every income level and the devastating effects on children, demand all the help we can get to draw attention to the responsibility all of us must assume."

Other Norton priorities in the appropriation include funding for the D.C. TAG college tuition assistance program; reimbursement for emergency planning and security costs; a new forensics lab for the city; and a program to help ex-offenders find housing. Mayor Anthony Williams, Metropolitan Police Chief Charles Ramsey and survivors of children killed by gun violence will speak. Norton is encouraging residents to use the town meeting to let Congress know how important the gun safety laws are to them. Senator Brownback also initiated 100 percent federally-funded Marriage Development Accounts in the appropriation to promote and save marriage and eliminate finances as a factor. He discussed the program with the Congresswoman, who found the idea consistent with and re-enforcing of her work with the Commission on Black Men and Boys. Norton founded the Commission to address the unique problems of African American males as a way to strengthen the Black family and the quality of life for African American children, 70 per cent of whom are born to never-married women nationwide. The voluntary Marriage Development Accounts, set up by engaged or married couples for home purchases, education and small business expenses, will be matched up to three to one by the federal government. The program also provides marriage and relationship counseling on a voluntary basis. Norton said, "The deterioration of the American family, that is even more severe among African Americans, requires a complicated recipe of government, community and individual action that is mostly absent. The virtual disappearance of marriage among many young African Americans of every income level and the devastating effects on children, demand all the help we can get to draw attention to the responsibility all of us must assume." Other

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